

The Semaphore

A PUBLICATION OF TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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Little City News

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VOL. XX

SAN FRANCISCO, WEDNESDAY, JAN. 25, 1961

"THE CITY WITHIN A CITY."



151

No. 19

Protect Character of Hill

Telegraph Hill Dwellers Start Fund Campaign

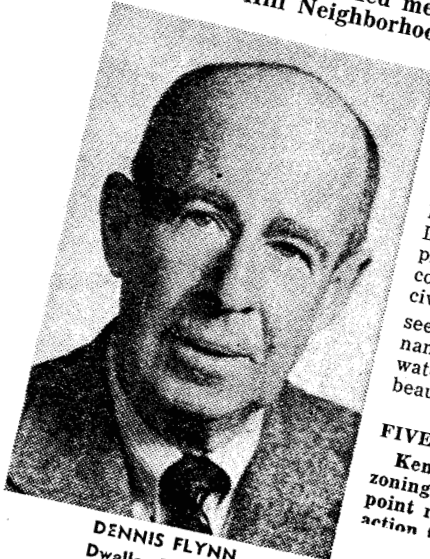
Members of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers have rallied to protect the character of the hill against a group of property owners interested in redevelopment.

In an emotion-filled meeting on Monday Jan. 16, at the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood House, members of the group pledged over \$500 to protect the 40 foot height limit and prevent the area bounded by Union, Sanson, Broadway, Columbus and Grant Avenue from being declared a blighted area.

In an opening address Dennis Flynn, president of the Hill Dwellers, pointed out that city planners and developers often had conflicting views. He urged all civic organizations to be alert to see that nothing is done in the name of progress especially on the waterfront which will destroy its beauty.

FIVE POINT REPORT

Kenneth Evers, chairman of the zoning committee, read a five point report outlining a course of action for the Hill Dwellers to fol-



DENNIS FLYNN
Dweller President





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Cover: This article from the January 25, 1961 issue of *Little City News*, a North Beach Weekly, spotlights THDs efforts to protect the neighborhood from "redevelopment." See story page 14

The Semaphore is a publication of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers for its members. Articles, except for the summary of Board of Directors' Motions, do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Association or its Officers, but are the opinions of the writers of the individual signed articles. The Association can take no responsibility for their content. This membership publication is not to be reprinted or disseminated without written permission.



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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?-

By Paul Scott

We did it!! As hard to imagine as this may have been some nine months ago, we actually pulled it off. Against a mayor who autocratically proclaimed at one point that he was going to “shut us down.” Against a well-organized, relentless lobbying effort by Joe O'Donoghue and his Residential Builder's Association. And against blatantly slanted, at times libelous, reporting by a once proud local



newspaper named the Ex. We actually made it happen. We got ourselves a park.

Why? How did it happen? Did we make an unpublished compromise? Did we trade votes? Did we intimidate the opposition into submission? The answer, fortunately, is a resounding “no” on all fronts. It happened because we were right, we were resolute, and the political process in this town actually worked.

To his credit, Gavin Newsom ultimately listened to our arguments, rethought his concerns about financial practicality, then correctly decided to let his replacement decide the issue after he became mayor.

That is when we were visited by the goddess of the triangle. Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier was thrown into the thick of this battle the day she entered office. While we have reason to be hugely grateful to all the supes who voted in our favor, she was exactly the right person to cast the final vote.

After attending a meeting with her and others on the issue, I personally was convinced that, irrespective of how she decided, I was going to be a big fan either way. She was clearly someone who was simply trying to do the right thing and would not be susceptible to undue influence. She kept emphasizing that she needed reliable facts. And that is how she made her decision, based on the facts, and specifically not as a *quid pro quo* for our district or hers.

When a person of that character makes the final call, a successful vote is all the more rewarding. We didn't just win a park. We won a battle of principle, and along the way we were given reason to have faith in a system that has badly failed to meet expectations in recent years.

Huge thanks to all who took part. Listing

continued on p. 5

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

continued from p. 3

everyone who helped would fill this column. Suffice it to say that this was truly a magnificent group effort by literally hundreds of people in our community, who took the time to write, call, e-mail, attend hearings, deliver fliers, etc., all for the simple purpose of making our neighborhood a better place. It quite honestly makes me proud to live here.

Of course, this is just the beginning. The city will have to finalize the acquisition (the developer has already filed a lawsuit), we will have to develop a community based plan, and ultimately we will have to raise the funds from public and private sources to transform Joe DiMaggio Playground into a park worthy of his name. At this point, though, it is, thankfully, no longer a question of "if" we will get the park; it is simply a matter of "when." We just have to gather together again as a group and make it happen — something we now know we can do.

A few other points of interest:

Piers 27-31: We are still hard at work on Piers 27-31. We are joined in our efforts by the Citizens to Save the Waterfront (a diverse coalition of environmental organizations, neighborhood groups and numerous waterfront businesses) and also by the two largest commercial property holders surrounding the proposed project

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(Ron Kaufman Companies and the owners of Levi's Plaza).

At present, the project still lacks adequate indoor recreation and poses enormous traffic and parking issues for the neighborhood. We are working with architectural and planning professionals on possible design solutions to the traffic and parking issues, and we have sent a detailed letter to the State Lands Commission asking it to clarify the types of indoor recreation that could be added to the project. (Mills Corporation representatives have repeatedly blamed the State

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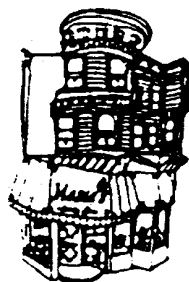


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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *continued from page 5*

Lands Commission for a 50 percent reduction in the recreation component of the project). We should know in the coming quarter whether it's possible to reach a compromise with Mills that addresses these concerns. If you are interested in the issue, please feel free to contact me, and I will provide you with more detailed information on the subject.

Emperor Norton: It appears there may be an amicable solution to the placement of the Emperor Norton statue. After a little back and forth, we held an informal meeting with both sides and made great progress. Talks are solidifying around placement of the statue on the lower portion of the Macchiarini Steps. We need input from more folks, but you can go ahead and hold your breath. It looks like the

Emperor may have found himself a home.

Movie in Washington Square Park: Due to the huge success of THD's Movie in Washington Square last year, we will be hosting two movies in the park this year — in or around May and September. We'll try and give you more notice this year. Check the website. If you didn't make it last year, be sure not to miss it this time around. It's really a terrific way to spend an evening in North Beach.

Ballpark: We will also be making another visit to Pac Bell Park this year for a baseball game. Around 60 people showed up last year. We are hoping to get an even bigger crowd this time. Come sit in the sun, grab a mitt-full of garlic fries, and meet some new friends from the neighborhood.



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THD'S FIFTIETH GETS UNDERWAY

By Rozell Overmire-

Fifty is a good age. It's a chance to pause and evaluate accomplishments and plan for the future. It's an age of full maturity when one's faculties are at their height. It's also an age to have fun. And that is exactly what THD plans to do on its 50th anniversary-

A group of past presidents have been meeting to plan commemorative events. Here's the schedule so far, but the committee says that there needs to be more. Send your suggestions to Gerry Crowley, (gerrycrowley@aol.com) .-

Some of the celebration has already occurred.

In early March, the Dwellers held a photo identification party at the THD archives as a way of getting a handle on our past. As THD archivist, I am looking for more photos and documents. You can contact me at rozell@ureach.com or 415-989-3945. -

Another celebration took place at the Schein & Schein Gallery, 1528 Grant Ave., on March 22. The event was a cocktail party and auction of the paintings of Betty Rader and Morton Rader. The Raders were long-time Telegraph Hill residents, and Morton Rader served as president of the THD in 1964 and '65. Funds from the event were donated to neighborhood parks and to Friends of Morton and Betty Rader, the group that saved the paintings.-

Starting in April Joe Butler, long-time THD leader who knows well the history, flora and fauna of

the hill, will lead walking tours to bring the less well-initiated up to speed.-

The central event of our 50th anniversary celebration will be our picnic at Coit Tower, to be held on Sept. 26. We'll be making a special effort to honor older members of the THD community, and we expect that many past presidents and long-time members will be in attendance. -

But this is just a start. There are 365 days in our anniversary year. With your suggestions we should be able to come up with many more ways to schedule commemorative fun. ✂



At a March 21 event at the Schein and Schein Gallery, celebrating THD's 50th birthday, Tony Gantner displays a painting by the late hill dweller, Betty Long Rader. Many works auctioned at the event benefited park maintenance programs on the hill.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT

Neighborhood Takes a Close Look at 55 Francisco

By Vedica Puri -

An application for yet another substantial new development on the waterfront below Telegraph Hill has been submitted to City Planning. The proposal is to subdivide the air rights above a four-story parking garage at 55 Francisco to allow the construction of a three-story, 51-unit residential condominium project above the garage. The 48,722 square-foot site also includes the 90-foot high McGraw Hill Building, originally built in 1918 as a warehouse. It was converted to an office building at the time the garage was built in 1969. -

There are a lot of problems with the project.

55 Francisco is one block from Piers 27-31, where Mills Corporation is proposing to build a massive office, retail and recreation complex, and across the street from 1700 Montgomery, one of two proposed sites for the relocation of the venerable Exploratorium. Mills, meanwhile, is attempting to "annex" the parking garages at 55 and 80 Francisco to mitigate their parking deficit.

55 Francisco also sits 45 feet away from the Wharf Plaza I and II building complex that houses approximately 300 seniors, as well as low-income and disabled people. Finally, 55 Francisco is also within a block of several other condominium project that, together, have well over 500 condo units of varying size. -

ROK properties, the developer of 55 Francisco, is proposing high-end, luxury condo units ranging from 700+ to 1,000+ square feet. Based on the

plans, the developer intends to build a structure similar in height to the McGraw Hill building next door and add valet parking. The proposal also includes a common roof patio. The trees, mechanical penthouse and the covered stairwell access doors will essentially add a fourth floor to this development. -

All of the homeowners associations, as well as the tenants and management of Wharf Park, representing nearly 1,000 residents, are opposing 55 Francisco. In addition to parking and traffic impacts, substantial legal issues have been raised involving height restrictions on development above the garage.

In 1999, the Planning Department determined that any future construction above the garage must be within the 5-to-1 floor area ratio applicable to the site, and that calculation must also include the gross square footage of the office building. At the THD's request, City Planning confirmed that this restriction would apply even if the property were subdivided. Much chicanery has been going on behind the scenes to circumvent this restriction. -

At this stage, the developer has applied for a conditional use permit and environmental review, and we are waiting to see whether the project will be granted a Negative Declaration or be required to submit to a full environmental review. I am spearheading the Stop 55 group. More details concerning this group's efforts can be found on our website at www.ziss.com/stop55.

GRANT AVE REVITALIZATION GROUP HAS PLANS

by Kathleen Dooley

Is there a street anywhere more alive than Grant Ave on a sunny October Saturday? Maybe not. But a Wednesday afternoon in March can be a

different story. That's one reason why The Grant Ave Avenue Street Revitalization Committee is working to make this street at the core of our

continued on next page

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT *continued*

neighborhood the prime destination it should be.

The group plans to start with garbage. We are working with the city and Golden Gate Disposal to identify which buildings contract for garbage disposal, as well as who owns which buildings along Grant Ave. When we get this information we will contact owners to see how we can realistically help them assess their needs and solve their garbage problems. For example, we can hookup buildings which have inadequate garbage storage space with those who might have extra space.

Golden Gate Disposal can also help us identify chronic household dumping sites. While the Department of Public Works removed trash cans along Grant Ave because of chronic dumping of household trash, the trash has not gone away. We feel the cans should be reintroduced, and pickups at key locations increased.

We will also contact merchants about going the extra mile in cleaning up the in front of their storefronts, and we will work with them to solve

particular litter creating situations. We can help them, for instance, to place free newspapers inside their shops. Further we plan to research the idea of locating a central kiosk to house all of these publications.

We are also organizing a quarterly neighborhood clean-up day with local middle schools, producing bilingual flyers to urge participation in these cleanup efforts and sponsoring a school poster contest with litter as its theme. These posters will be featured in merchant windows.

The revitalization of Grant Avenue is a complex issue. We have many other ideas we would like to implement this year, which, along with the physical clean-up of the street, include producing a promotional brochure about shopping and dining "daytime in North Beach," and recruiting new businesses that will bring a mix of locals and visitors to our neighborhood. We welcome your input. Contact us at info@columbinedesign.com with your ideas. ✂

TELEGRAPH HILL TREASURE HUNT

Each year since 1988, THD member Jayson Wechter has organized the Chinese New Year Treasure Hunt, a charity event which, in recent years, has benefited the Hamilton Family Center. While the hunt covers the entire eastern section of the city, those in the neighborhood on the evening of Feb. 7 probably noticed thousands of spirited participants prowling our hill in search of landmarks we walk past every day but may not notice.

Jayson has agreed to share some of his Telegraph Hill clues with *Semaphore* readers. Look for other clues in upcoming issues.

What two streets must one traverse in order to be in a position to enjoy the view of of Coit Tower picutred here? Answer in next issue of *The Semaphore*.

Two tiny streets sit side by side, but share an unmapped connection, giving them a shape that almost mirrors the letter their names share.



WHAT'S GOING ON WITH PARKING AND TRAFFIC?-

By Bill Seelinger and Gail Switzer-

The THD Parking and Traffic Committee has been taking up the following matters:-

New stop signs, realized and proposed: There will soon be stop signs on Powell at Greenwich as well as stop signs on Powell at Chestnut. The committee is also considering a recommendation that stop signs be placed on Grant Avenue at what some members consider to be the dangerous intersections of Vallejo and Green streets. DPT's Tom Folks researched the matter and said that accident records do not, by city standards, warrant stop signs at these intersections. However, if the THD board were to submit a request for stop signs, DPT would install them. The Parking and Traffic Committee tabled the issue in order to seek further information. -

Coit Tower traffic jams: The committee has been considering several possible solutions to

the traffic backups on Telegraph Hill Boulevard leading to Coit Tower. They are planning a community meeting to discuss issues and solutions related to parking at the tower.

Left turn from Columbus to Filbert: Some-time in the next three months, DPT will be matching the restrictions to left turns at this intersection to those at Union and Columbus.

City valet parking: At the request of the committee, DPT's Folks presented information on the situation in Manhattan Beach where motorists are charged a reasonable rate for city valet parking. The committee liked this idea in principle. The next step, however, will be to get merchant reaction. Committee member Paul Switzer will contact Marsha Garland of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce to discuss the idea.



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Vedica Puri To Head Waterfront Committee

By Art Peterson

Vedica Puri wasn't particularly a joiner. She had a full enough life practicing business litigation with the firm of Pillsbury & Levinson LLP, handling the occasional pro bono case, enjoying married life with Kevin Kaull, her husband of two years, and making frequent camping forays into the California outlands.--

Then in 2003 came the developer's plan to add 50 condos of three stories atop the four-story parking garage at 55 Francisco. (See, p. 9). Vedica lives across the street from this address at 111 Chestnut St. and she was going to lose a bay view, the effect of which would be to seriously diminish the value of her property. While this possibility caused her dismay, the process upset her even more. A major change was about to take place in her neighborhood, and no one seemed to know much about it. --

Vedica contacted the residents at nearby 1855 Kearny St., known as Wharf Plaza I and II where many of the residents are senior, disabled and low-income. The plans for this development were news to them. -

Vedica got in touch with THD. Becoming a member of our organization, she got to know Nan Roth, the venerable chairwoman of THD's Waterfront Committee. Roth told her that THD had been tracking the 55 Francisco development for several years and if any opposition was to be mounted, it would require galvanizing the local community. Not long after, in November 2003,

Roth found it necessary to give up the leadership of the Waterfront Committee and Vedica was there to assume her duties.--

Vedica is approaching her new responsibilities with a dedication and discipline instilled at an early age. Born and raised in the Peninsula town of Los Altos, she is the child of a chemical engineer and an English professor. Her parents were born in India and brought to their child-rearing a certain old-world, no-nonsense

approach. They didn't understand the logic, for instance, of a ceremony celebrating junior high graduation. Vedica's mother told her graduating from junior high was not cause for celebration as much as it was a prerequisite to living in their home.

Upon Vedica's graduation from high school, the family decided to relocate to Bombay, where they lived with Vedica's grandparents while she attended college and continued her training as an Indian classical dancer. This return to

her family roots led to a greater understanding of her ethnic culture and her family's values.

"Who gets the chance to really get to know their grandparents? They unintentionally helped me figure out where my parents were coming from when I heard the same things my folks said coming straight from my grandparents."

Returning to the United States after graduating First Class (a distinction similar to summa cum laude), Vedica attended law school at Santa Clara University and graduated in 1994. Over



continued on next page

VEDICA PURI -cont'd from page 12

the last decade, Vedica has practiced with firms in the Bay Area specializing in complex business litigation.

But as chairwoman of the waterfront committee, Vedica sees herself less as an advocate and more as a problem solver. "The waterfront houses some of the Bay Area's most precious, unspoiled remaining land," she said. "If growth is to occur in this area, it must occur responsibly. To achieve this goal requires skillful consensus building and a passion for preservation. Hopefully, I have what it takes to follow in my predecessor's [Roth's] formidable shoes."

And there are plenty of problems to solve. Should the Mills Corp. be required to increase the recreation component of the Piers 27-31 development? What developments are being proposed for Piers 1-1/2 to 5? What parking issues will these new developments bring with them? Should the leases of waterfront businesses be carefully tracked to guard against unnecessary noise and congestion? What is the status of the hotel being proposed at the Embarcadero and Broadway?

With so much on her plate, our ever-responsible new waterfront chair, the lover of camping, may find herself pitching a tent more often on the Embarcadero than in her beloved Sierras.

THD Board Motions FOR THE MONTHS OF DEC. 2003, JAN., FEB. 2004

December, 2003:

None

January, 2004:

MOTION: A motion was made to reduce the reimbursement amount given to Board members who provide dinner for Board meetings to \$100.

February, 2004:

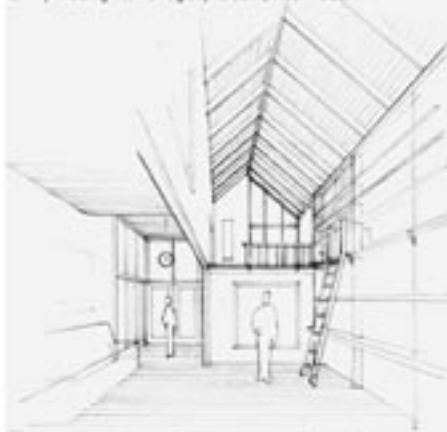
MOTION: THD will enter into an agreement with the North East San Francisco Conservancy, a 501(c)3, as a non-profit fiscal sponsor, for purposes of raising funds for public space and parks projects.

MOTION: THD opposes Proposition J.



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THD: The First Ten Years-

With this issue, in recognition of THD's 50th anniversary, The Semaphore begins a history of our organization. This first article focuses on our first 10 years, 1954-1964. Most of the information in this account is drawn from The Bulletin, THD's newsletter during that period. Some information also comes from "Telegraph Hill Dwellers, 1954-1994" a brief history by former THD President Bob Tibbits.-

By Art Peterson

It began back in 1954, when Hill Dwellers communicated not by e-mail, web site and list serve, but rather by dialing YUkon, EXcelsior or GARfield. At THD events there was no "open

bar." Rather, there were "Dutch treats."

In those days, Herb Caen, San Francisco's premier newspaper columnist, had his reasons for spending as much time as possible in the neighborhood. "The bay looks wetter from Telegraph Hill," he wrote. It still does.

The catalyst that mobilized hill residents to form the Telegraph Hill Dwellers was a proposal to eliminate the 39-Coit bus. The Dwellers won that one, and shortly after went on to use their collective clout to persuade PG&E to light Coit Tower for the Christmas holidays.

The THD newsletter did not begin publication until 1956. Known in these first few years as *The Bulletin*, its first editor was David Myrick, who would go on to write the definitive history of life on the hill.

The alarm bell issues that have concerned THD throughout its history were much in evidence during these formative years. In 1955, the State Department of Transportation came up with a plan for freeways through the Panhandle and Golden Gate Park to connect the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. THD joined with the Central Committee of

continued on next page



A 1956 *Examiner* photo, taken on Union Street, promotes THD tree planting and the Grant Ave. Street Fair. Peter Macchiarini is at the right. Carol Eaton, Miss San Francisco, holds a watering can. Others in the photo are identified in THD minutes as "Mr. Sullivan, Mrs. Erskine, Mrs. Erchenbach, Clarice Meyer, Rhoda Pack and Booth Goodman."

THD'S 1ST 10 YEARS *continued*

Civic Clubs to squelch this idea.

But that was not the end of the freeway mania that gripped the state during those years. In 1962, San Francisco's own state senator, Gene McAteer, sent up a trial balloon suggesting a second Marin crossing, one which would have its terminus between Sansome and Stockton streets. This plan *The Bulletin* editorialized would have left hill dwellers "cringing in the dark shadows with views of the bottom of the bridge deck." Under pressure, McAteer backed off.

Later that year, Frieda Klussmann, a Telegraph Hill Dweller best known as the woman who saved the cable cars, advanced the idea of tearing down the Embarcadero freeway and building a Ferry Park, a dream finally realized with the intervention of the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989.

Since the early days of the organization, Hill Dwellers have jealously guarded their city and bay views. In 1956, plans were put forward for an 11-story apartment building at 1255 Montgomery, just behind Speedy's, a construction that was possible because the height limit at that time was 65 feet. After a three-year struggle, 100 hill residents converged on the Board of Supervisors in May 1959 to protest this project. The result of their effort was the passage of a 40-foot height limit for the south side of the hill.

A few years later, in 1961, after the construction of the 17-story Fontana Apartments on the northern waterfront, THD joined the Russian Hill Improvement Association in successfully championing a 40-foot height limit along the waterfront north of the Ferry Building.

The pressure for new and massive construction on the hill needs to be viewed through the filter of the "redevelopment" mindset that dominated much thinking during these years. If the neighborhood could be shown to be "blighted," it would be eligible for the same bulldozer approach to

"renewal" that had flattened the Fillmore District. In April 1961, an organization, TEHPO which claimed to be made up of Telegraph Hill Property Owners, issued a report stating "90 percent of the structures [on the hill] are substandard and fail to comply with numerous building requirements. Many are unfit for human habitation."

Gross exaggeration that this claim was, the Hill Dwellers were feeling the pressure, and almost every issue of *The Bulletin* urged "neighborhood conservation through voluntary self improvement." Tree planting was encouraged. These were the years when, with a push from the Hill Dwellers, wiring was being put underground. (THD had, in fact, a Poles and Wires Committee.) In 1962, *The Bulletin* was urging that trees be planted along Lombard Street at the locations where telephone poles had recently been. The impressive results can be seen today.

Parking, then as now, was an issue on the hill. On upper Montgomery Street *The Bulletin* counted 157 parking places for 450 residents, a problem compounded by The Shadows restaurant which had "wangled two curb side unloading spaces and was using them for parking."

But, as today, THD was about more than confronting neighborhood problems. Members were also eager to contribute to the community and have fun. The organization was involved with raising supplemental funds for the renovation of Washington Square. "If every Hill Dweller gives \$1.00 to the cause, we can present the small ones of the neighborhood with an impressive sandbox."

Since 1956, THD had been responsible for decorations at the Grant Avenue Street Fair, which, in that year, drew 30,000 fun seekers. And there were many other festive times. Each year, at the appearance of the first peach blossom in his

continued on page 19



San Francisco Embarcadero National Register

By Mark Paez and Nancy Shanahan-

Visitors who have been away from the San Francisco waterfront for a few years sometimes can't believe their eyes.

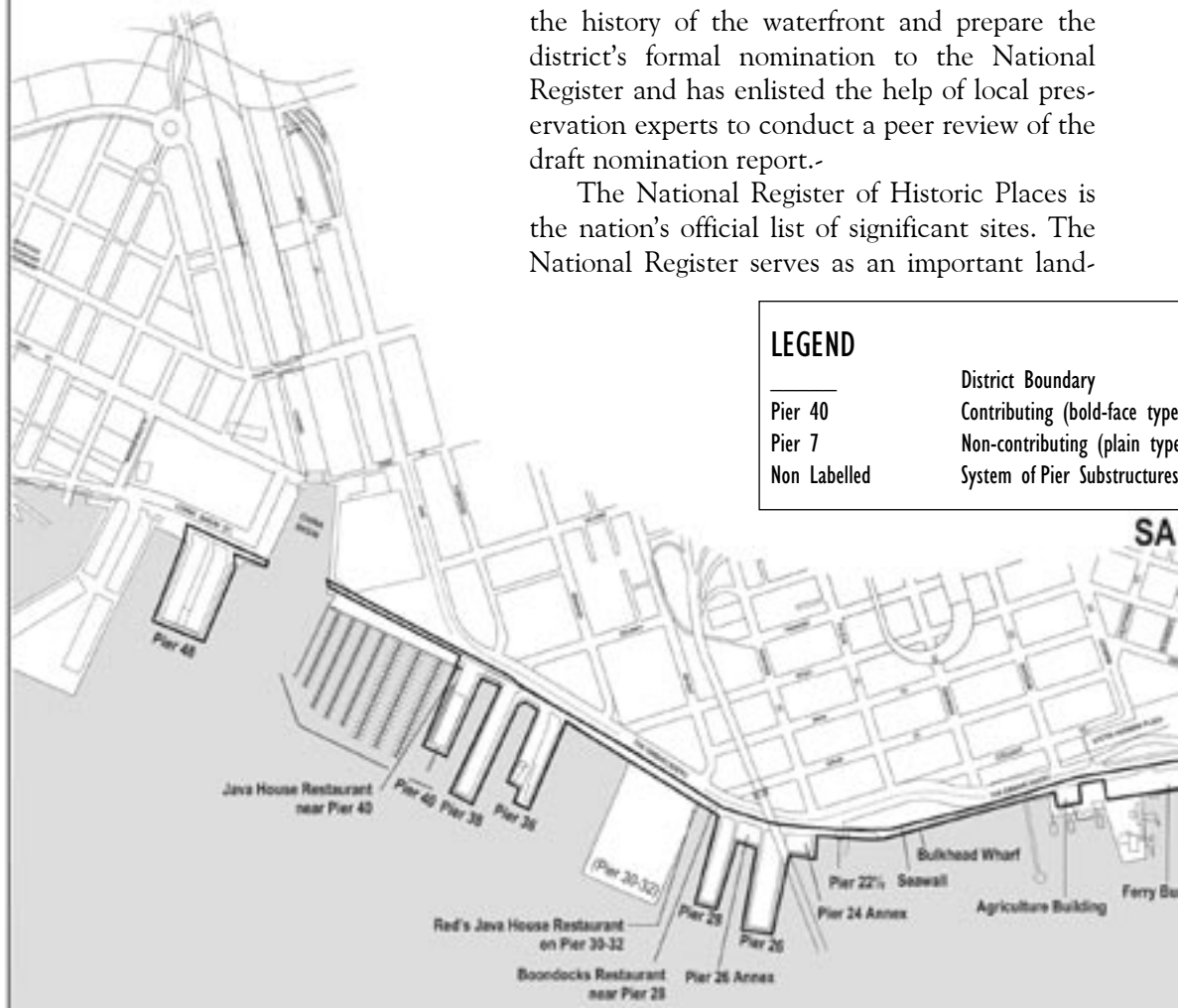
They are delighted by the intelligent transformation that has taken place by planners who, while not afraid of change, have a respect for the past.

This effort to treat our architectural history with deference will soon get a boost when

a three-mile stretch of the northern waterfront from Pier 45 to Pier 48 at China Basin, including approximately 30 individual historic resources (see map below), is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco this stretch of the waterfront will be designated the San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District.

In preparation, the Port has retained renowned historian Michael Corbett to research the history of the waterfront and prepare the district's formal nomination to the National Register and has enlisted the help of local preservation experts to conduct a peer review of the draft nomination report.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of significant sites. The National Register serves as an important land-



LEGEND

Pier 40

Pier 7

Non Labelled

District Boundary

Contributing (bold-face type)

Non-contributing (plain type)

System of Pier Substructures

The Historic District May Soon Be A Reality

use planning tool. Before federal funding can be made available for any project, the National Historic Preservation Act requires that potential impacts on listed historic properties be considered and avoided if possible.

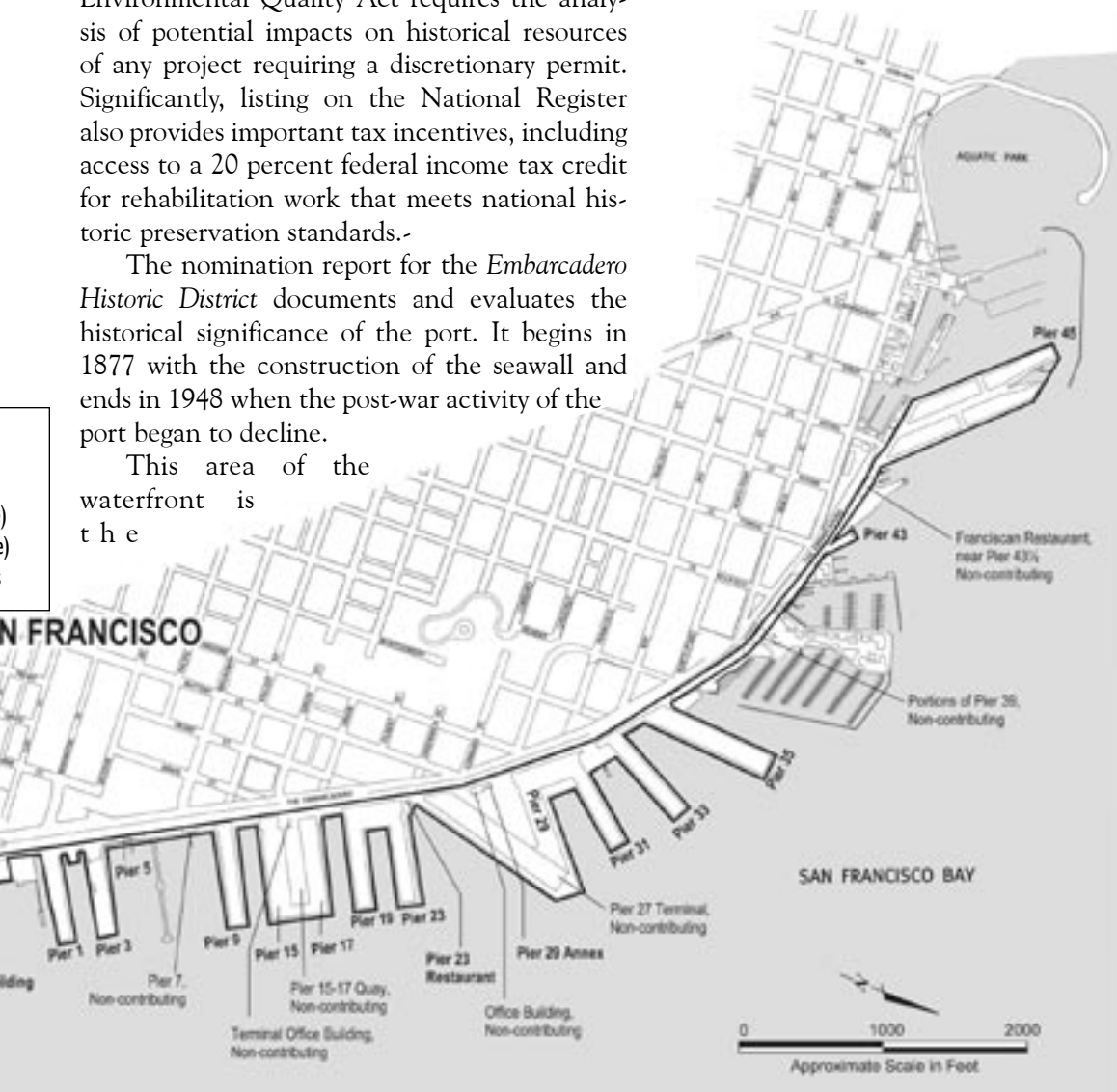
At the state level, the California Environmental Quality Act requires the analysis of potential impacts on historical resources of any project requiring a discretionary permit. Significantly, listing on the National Register also provides important tax incentives, including access to a 20 percent federal income tax credit for rehabilitation work that meets national historic preservation standards.-

The nomination report for the *Embarcadero Historic District* documents and evaluates the historical significance of the port. It begins in 1877 with the construction of the seawall and ends in 1948 when the post-war activity of the port began to decline.

This area of the waterfront is the

last surviving “break-bulk” port (where goods that arrived in bulk were broken down into smaller units for shipping and marketing) of its kind in the country. As such, the proposed historic district is eligible for the National Register

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From the Desk of Supervisor Peskin

After many months of debate, the Board of Supervisors voted in favor of acquiring, by eminent domain, the Triangle adjacent to Joe DiMaggio Playground. Our newest supervisor, District 2's Michela Alioto-Pier, was the eighth and final vote to preserve the open space and expand the park.-



result in getting the water flowing in the fountain once more.-

Following the '89 earthquake, an initial effort was made to remove the fountain, but failed amid skepticism about the city's commitment to revitalizing the Embarcadero area. Over a decade later, the landscape has changed

drastically and it is time to reevaluate the design of Justin Herman Plaza. I look forward to your input as this process moves forward.-

*

Emotions ran high on both sides of this debate. Last fall, hundreds of people — Dwellers and residents of North Beach and Chinatown — turned out to speak in favor of acquiring the Triangle. Many of you wrote letters, e-mails and made calls to my colleagues on the Board as well. However, some members of THD were opposed to the eminent domain proceedings. I thank you, too, for your commitment to the public process and for informing the Board of your point of view.-

Now that the Board of Supervisors has voted to acquire the Triangle, I would like to call on folks from both sides of the debate to come together and plan the future of this site. Many important decisions still remain. I have called for the formation of a task force to seek community input regarding design plans and the possibility of closing Mason Street between the existing park and the triangle.

*

In other news, after two years of trying to get the city to turn the water back on, I introduced a resolution urging city agencies to consider the possible removal of the Vaillancourt Fountain from Justin Herman Plaza. The resolution instructs the departments to explore replacing the fountain with alternative works of art or public areas and to explore possible funding sources for such removal and replacement. I am hopeful that my controversial efforts will, at a very minimum,

On a different note, the annual City budget process is ramping up as the Board of Supervisors president recently announced new committee memberships. I will continue to serve on the Finance and Audits Committee as vice-chair, and have been added to the Land Use Committee as vice-chair. I was also appointed to chair a newly formed Planning Department Audit Select Committee that will hold hearings on the recently completed assessment of this vital department.-

As most of you will recall, the city's budget process last year involved substantial cuts to city services and employee payroll. While the deficit for the current fiscal year approached \$300 million, the projected shortfall for the coming fiscal year (beginning July 1) is likely to exceed \$400 million. While I am no longer serving on the Budget Committee, I will be keeping a close eye on the city's financial situation.-

I am hopeful that District 3 will have the opportunity to host a meeting of the Budget Committee, to discuss the direct impacts of this year's budget situation on our community (as we did last year).

Also, a few quick updates:-

North Beach Place: Slated for completion

continued on next page

SUPERVISOR PESKIN *cont'd from page 18*

late this summer, the North Beach Place will include 341 units, including 48 senior housing units. Many of the apartments will begin renting in late August or early September.

Traffic Improvements: You may have noticed that nine new pedestrian traffic signals have been installed along Columbus between Bay and Washington streets. Our office has been working with the Department of Public Works on traffic improvements, including re-paving streets in that area.

Sound Off! Late last month, we had our first town hall meeting of 2004 at the Jean Parker Middle School. Representatives of the mayor's

office, Muni and the Departments of Parking & Traffic, Recreation & Parks and Public Works were on hand to answer questions about specific issues. Join us again on the following dates for another opportunity: Thursday, April 22, from 6-8 p.m. at Francisco Middle School, 2190 Powell St., and Thursday, June 3, from 6-8 p.m. at Redding Elementary School, 1421 Pine St.

As always, please be in touch with my office when you have questions or concerns with the neighborhood or the city: 554-7450, or aaron.peskin@sfgov.org. See you at the café or around the neighborhood. ✂

THD'S 1ST 10 YEARS-*cont'd from page 15*

lower Alta Street garden, Bill Catelli hosted his Peach Blossom Festival, a major blowout whose queen was chosen by lot. In June 1958, an open-air concert was held at the intersection of Filbert and Napier Lane at which Grace Marchant, she of garden fame, performed on the Hammond organ.

Reading in *The Bulletin* about events such as these, one is impressed by the small-town quality that has always been so much a part of life here. The publication had time and space to pay tribute to John De Martini, the neighborhood street clear who "lives at Columbus and Mason and covers the entire route over a day, some areas twice."

The newsletter carried Speedy's ad for Telegraph Hill Sherry and there were plenty of pet stories: Cass, "the thousand-dollar cat" presented to its owners by their tenant who skipped and left the cat in lieu of back rent. Or the 30-pound cat, "a mobile landmark" belonging to Valetta and Desmond Haslet, a "veterinarian's marvel; the butcher's best customer."

Details such as this lead us to view this period through a veneer of nostalgia for a different time.

One would not likely see in a 21st century issue of the *Semaphore* this ad from 1959:

"Riddle for the Ladies: What is the only concentrated soap powder that washes knit woolens scrupulously without loss of size AND makes girdles last twice as long? Give up? Go down to the Emporium's Cosmetics Department and ask Miss Payton and Miss Smith to tell you all about Wash-a-Kit. They've used it themselves for some time and think very highly of it."

But, at the same time, *The Bulletin's* 1964 reflection on THD's first 10 years of work sounds as if it could have been written yesterday: "We have been the strongest single force in bringing about neighborhood improvement." It was the job of the Hill Dweller to "work to preserve the best characteristics of Telegraph Hill life." And, then as now, that would include the 39-Coit bus. ✂

THD Presidents: The First Ten Years

1954-56	Fred Meyer (Executive, Granny Goose Foods)
1956-58	Ken Evers (Contractor)
1958-59	Robert Major (Doctor)
1960-62	Dennis Flynn (Real Estate Broker)
1962-64	Bernard Bour (Newspaper Journalist)

Pioneer Park Reforestation

By Joe Butler

Alarmed by the development at the summit of Russian Hill in the 1870's, 12 property owners on the top of Telegraph Hill donated their land to the city for use as a park in honor of the pioneers who settled San Francisco.

Over the next decades, Pioneer Park, as it came to be known, enjoyed a rich and colorful history, but little attention was paid to the park's landscaping. Then, in 1910, the Women's Art League, in an effort to save the park, successfully stopped decades of quarrying by the Gray Brothers on the east slopes of Telegraph Hill. Over the next 20 years, the few eucalyptus trees on the barren, windswept summit were joined by a planting of wind-and-drought tolerant Monterey cypress. -

The trees in the park provide an oasis for visitors and, from a distance, mark the summit of the hill while framing Coit Tower. The cypress, however, are too tall and too close to the top of the hill to be easily maintained. The Recreation and Park tree toppers, a hardy bunch to be sure, bi-annually risk life and limb to prune the trees to provide views for locals and tourists.

Eight years ago, the Pioneer Park Project began a 20-year reforestation plan. The plan called for planting coastal live oaks, with flowering buckeye and cherry from local seed stock forming the lower canopy. Flowering ceanothus,

toyon, coyote brush and ribes sanguinem would fill the under story, and a variety of drought-tolerant grasses, flowers and groundcovers would hold the steep slopes against the ravages of wind and rain.

Since 1995, neighborhood and citywide volunteers have assisted the Rec and Park gardeners in planting and weeding the transitional forest to replace the cypress. With a dozen years left to go in the effort we have learned important lessons as to which trees will grow where, and which will not. -

In several areas in the park, small parts of the cypress forest have been cut and replanted. Professional gardeners, arborists and community volunteers have crafted — and are implementing — the reforestation plan to create habitat, while reducing maintenance and water use in the park.

We welcome input and labor in managing the transition. Community meetings and park walks will be held this spring to update the plan, assess the progress, and discuss plans for the future reforestation in light of our experiences to date. -

If we do nothing, the hill in 2015 or 2020 may look a lot like it did in 1915: barren and dusty. Instead, the incremental removal of the cypress is providing light and space for the second century of forest on Telegraph Hill. -
F. Joseph Butler, AIA, is the Parks and Trees Committee, liaison to the THD Board of Directors. He may be contacted at 776-9416. ✂

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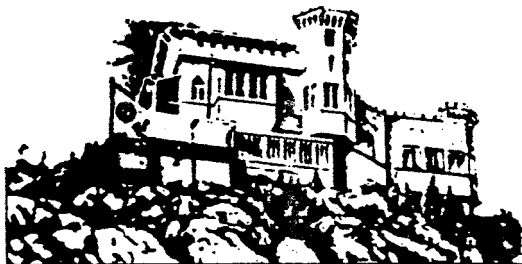
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Tel-Hi Benefit Coming Soon-

By Maya Armour-

The Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center, or Tel-Hi, sittin' just blocks from the Bay between Fisherman's Wharf and the Embarcadero, invites the entire community to this year's fundraiser, Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay. The event will be held May 13, 6:30 to 11 p.m.

Readers whose musical knowledge extends to the dim past before Brittany Spears and hip hop will recognize that the evening's theme, drawn from the 1967 Otis Redding and Steve Cropper song, "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," The song was inspired by Redding's weeklong stay on a houseboat in Sausalito, where he spent much of his time "watching the tide roll away."

Redding's song focuses on kicking back in the environs of our city, but Tel-Hi, one of San Francisco's oldest social service agencies, makes us realize that the delight in living here extends way beyond the city's pleasant ambience. Visit Tel-Hi on any given day and you'll come across preschoolers creating art projects, elementary school kids learning new computer skills, kids playing basketball and seniors practicing tai chi and line dancing steps.

Once a year however, for Tel-Hi's major fundraising effort, the central space where many of these activities occur is transformed. I have fond memories of last year's conversion of the area into a 1950's beatnik supper club, complete with berets, martinis and live jazz. The event brought old friends, new neighbors, funders and

government officials together to raise money to support all Tel-Hi programs, serving children, youth, families and seniors.

I loved wandering around the silent auction, martini in hand, keeping tabs on my auction bids while laughing and chatting with fun-loving people who care about the community and want to make it an even better place to live. The good spirits continued throughout the evening when I joined nine dear friends at the table for a delicious dinner.

I expect a similar mood will be pervade this year's which will be held at the center, 660 Lombard St. You can't dock your boat on Lombard Street that night, but be prepared to experience an underwater escapade!

Special guests will include Mayor Gavin Newsom and Supervisor Aaron Peskin. Some highlights of the evening will include hors d'oeuvres and dinner by Taste Catering; hosted cocktails, margaritas by Tommy's Heavenly Margarita Mix and El Tesoro de Don Felipe tequila; live rhythm and blues by Clyde St. Band; and silent and live auctions, featuring the chance to bid on a seven-day-getaway at a secluded beachfront retreat on Abaco Island, Bahamas.

Individual tickets are \$175; \$100 for ages 40 and under. Sponsorships are also available. For event information, please contact Eva Gabel at Tel-Hi at 415-421-6443 x34 or eva@tel-hi.org.





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EMBARCADERO HISTORIC DISTRICT *continued from page 17*

because it is significant in the areas of engineering, architecture, government, commerce, labor history and transportation. As an introduction to the historic district's significance, we have prepared the following four topic area summaries based on Michael Corbett's nomination report:

Engineering

The Port developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a man-made facility that functioned for many decades as one of the largest and most active ports in the United States.

The first step in the development of the port was construction of the seawall whose location and design was fundamental to all that followed. The seawall established a shoreline that was regularized in shape and stabilized in structure, pro-

viding an efficient and dependable water front line. On the landward side of the seawall, new land was created by depositing dredging materials taken from the Bay to provide an adequate depth for shipping.

As the seawall was built in stages from 1877 to 1934, wharves (built parallel to the shoreline) and piers (built generally perpendicular to the shoreline) were built along it. The size, design and spacing of these piers changed with changes in technology. Most 19th century wooden piers deteriorated quickly and were rebuilt or replaced every 10 years. In the early 20th century, creosoted wood piles, reinforced concrete piles, and concrete-jacketed wood piles substantially increased the life-span of piers.

continued on next page



PHOTO CREDIT: MARITIME NATIONAL PARK.

A 1916 photo of the neo-classical pier arch at Pier 43 ½. The pier was used to transfer cargo from rail cars to ferries and vice-versa.

EMBARCADERO HISTORIC DISTRICT *continued from page 22*



PHOTO CREDIT: PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO

Belt railroad building, a mixture of mission revival and prairie styles, being moved in 1919 from pier 3 to pier 27 where it exists today

Larger ships required longer and wider piers, and larger spaces between piers. The need to protect cargo from the elements led to the construction of a covered shed called a transit shed on every pier. To accommodate ticket sellers, passenger needs, clerical needs, the fee collection system and security needs, office buildings called bulkhead buildings and bulkhead connectors were built at the front of most piers and across the bulkhead wharves. These are the buildings that you see along the Embarcadero today.

Because of an extreme vulnerability to fire, many of the piers, transit sheds and bulkhead buildings were built of fire resistant materials — heavy timber, cement stucco, reinforced concrete, steel, and wire glass, and were equipped with fire

alarm systems.

The features of the district were designed almost entirely by engineers and exemplify the typically anonymous work of modern engineering of the time.

Architecture

The proposed historic district is also significant in the area of architecture and community planning. The port became a manifestation of the City Beautiful Movement, the emerging view that American cities need not be dark, soiled, unsafe places, but through architecture, technology and planning could be made beautiful. The San Francisco Civic Center, begun in 1912, and San Fran-

continued on next page

EMBARCADERO HISTORIC DISTRICT *continued from page 23*

cisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 were examples of this aesthetic at work.

Damage to the piers caused by the earthquake and fire of 1906 provided the practical necessity of rebuilding the piers. In contrast to the early period when port buildings lacked any architectural embellishment, the piers and other structures built between 1912 and 1938 were provided with monumental architectural imagery and planning typical of the movement. The general result was to bring order out of chaos. -

In addition, the impressive looking new waterfront showcased the substantial role of the port in seeking to realize the imperial aspirations of the United States in the Pacific after the annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines. Anticipation of the opening of the Panama Canal in 1915 and competition with other West Coast ports for increased trade brought on by completion of the canal as well as prospects for trade across the Pacific provided a deadline for improvements.

In 1908, the first new piers to follow these ideas were built south of the Ferry Building, with facade designs drawing on the Spanish missions of California and more generally on Mediterranean vernacular architecture which was seen as in an appropriate spirit for California.

Like many Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroad stations, it was part of an effort to market California to outsiders as a special place which was not brand new but which had its own honorable and romantic history. In this case, passengers debarking at these piers would find grand buildings that seemed to belong to California rather than buildings that reminded them of Rome, Paris, New England or any other place.-

The second phase of pier construction, beginning in 1915, was north of the Ferry Building where Neo-classical imagery was chosen. These facades were stylistically like buildings at the

Panama-Pacific International Exposition and the Civic Center. They were directly inspired by the Chelsea Piers in New York, nine piers and bulkhead connectors along 13 blocks of New York's Hudson River waterfront designed by Warren & Wetmore, architects of Grand Central Station.-

In the late 1920s, piers at either end of the continuous development of piers along the Embarcadero were built with gothic imagery to reflect their distinctive plans and large size.

Commerce

The proposed historic district represents an important period within the larger history of the Port of San Francisco, during a sustained period of prosperity when it played a central role in the economic development and prosperity of the city.

From the beginning of the Gold Rush in 1849 to the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Port was the only substantial supplier of goods to California.

From 1869 to around 1890, the port, exporting primarily wheat and lumber, was the only major port on the Pacific Coast of the United States.

From 1890 to about 1925, other West Coast ports and increased competition from the railroads drew trade away from San Francisco, but San Francisco remained the largest port. With the growth of San Francisco's manufacturing and financial industries, the relative importance of the port to San Francisco's economy declined even as its business grew.

From 1925 to about 1950, the Port of San Francisco remained a leading West Coast port while facing competition from other Bay and West Coast cities. Starting about 1960, the port declined dramatically with the advent of container shipping and competition from the Port of

continued on next page

EMBARCADERO HISTORIC DISTRICT *continued from page 24*

Oakland and elsewhere.

Transportation

The historic district is also significant as the focus of seagoing transportation in San Francisco during a time when ships played a principal role in moving people and materials. Every feature of the district was designed to accommodate the berthing of ships, the loading and unloading of cargo, and interaction with land-based transportation. The structures that survive today in the district represent accommodations for ships as varied as tug boats and passenger liners.

Among the existing historic features of the district, the Ferry Building, designed by the important San Francisco architect A. Arthur Brown and completed in 1903, was the focus of many commuter ferry lines across the Bay, a use that survives to this day.

While the principal ferry lines served Alameda, Oakland, and Berkeley with frequent service, they also served smaller and more distant cities from Vallejo in the north to Redwood City in the south. In addition to commuter service, some piers were embarkation points to inland cities like Stockton, others to coastal routes along the Pacific; still other piers were home to ships sailing long distance routes to the continents of the world.

For the ferry lines that served passengers, waiting rooms, ticket windows, baggage rooms and other facilities were generally provided in the bulkhead building of each pier facing The Embarcadero.

Most companies that carried passengers also carried freight. Typically, each pier was occupied by one company. On the same pier where passen-

continued on next page



Pier 22 1/2 Renaissance Revival fire house, still functioning today.

PHOTO CREDIT: SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

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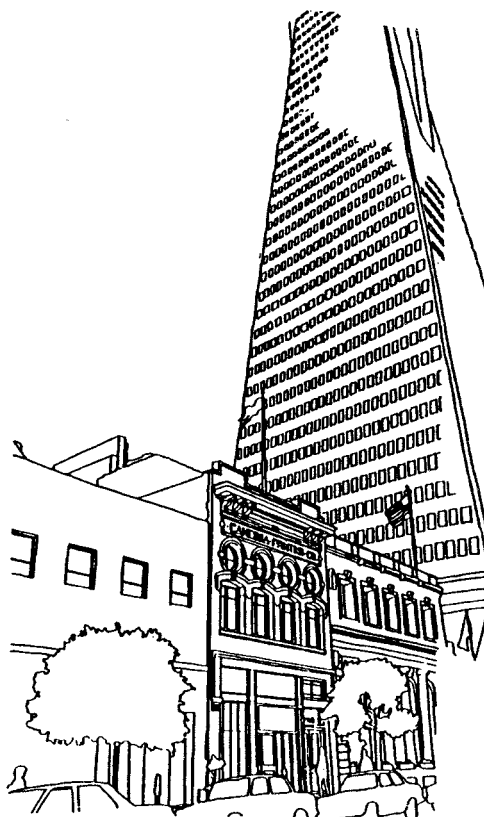
EMBARCADERO HISTORIC DISTRICT *continued from page 25*

gers were in the bulkhead building at the front of the pier, freight and the stevedores who handled the freight were accommodated on the main part of the pier.

In addition to these water transportation companies, railroads were also present. The Western Pacific Railroad maintained a car-ferry terminal at Pier 43. The Belt Line Railroad, established by the Board of State Harbor Commissioners, linked all the piers to nearby warehouses and rail lines. The Southern Pacific Company operated ferries to the Ferry Building but did not operate rail lines north of Harrison Street.

The Port is working with Michael Corbett to put the finishing touches on the historic district nomination report for presentation to the Port Commission on May 11, 2004. After that, the nomination will be formally submitted to the State Office of Historic Preservation and heard by the State Historic Resources Commission in August. If approved, the nomination will be forwarded to the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

To obtain a copy of the draft nomination or to receive notice of upcoming public hearings on the proposed historic district, please contact Mark Paez, Port Planning staff by telephone: (415) 706-8674 or email: mark.paez@sfgov.org



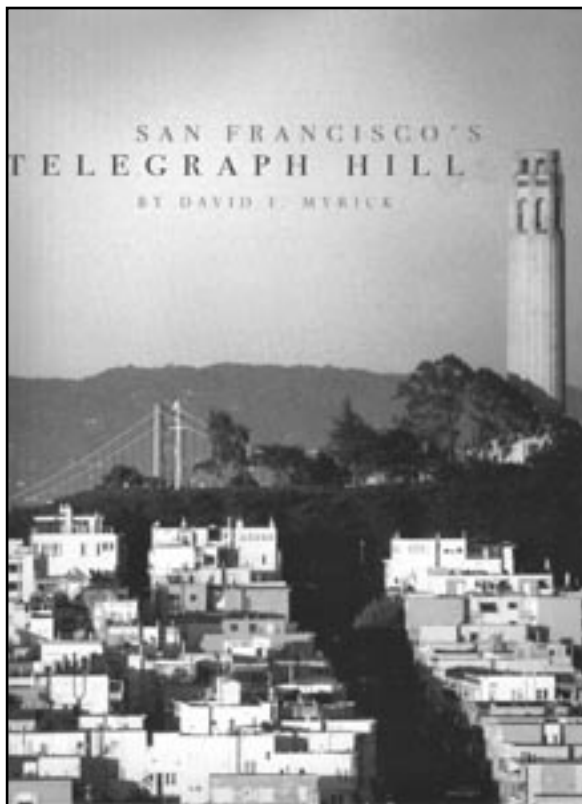
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Parks & Trees Report

By *Julienne M. Christensen*

North Beach Pool: The contractor for the pool and clubhouse project, AR Construction, has filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy protection. The bonding agency, which has insured the completion deadline and quality of the project, is in the process of interviewing the other bidders and other qualified contractors. It is in their best interest, as well as ours, that they determine a course of action and work to get the project back on track as quickly and efficiently as possible. Everyone involved at the bonding company and on city staff is motivated to resolve this.

This development may not be entirely bad news, if we get a robust, eager, capable replacement for AR. There are contract penalties for late completion, and stringent quality control oversight from both the city and Paulett Taggart Architects is still in effect. But, with weather and unforeseen site conditions having already delayed the project by five weeks, and additional time being needed to set up a new construction plan and begin implementing it, further delays are likely. Once a new construction team is on site, revised completion schedules will be posted.

Triangle: Supervisor Peskin's office can offer the most cogent explanation of the machinations now underway. Our agenda reads like this:

1. Acquire the land.
2. Restart public meetings regarding the Joe DiMaggio master plan and the library, includ-

ing discussion of the fate of Mason Street.

3. Develop schematic plans based on public input.
4. Prepare a preliminary budget.
5. Begin fundraising.

With the legal process promising to be lengthy in itself, this is obviously a long-term commitment - and worth it!

Pioneer Park: Joe Butler, who was a key player in the Pioneer Park Project and still leads the neighborhood volunteer Saturdays up in the park, can provide details on this subject. Essentially, one of the key long-range aspects of the Pioneer Park reforestation plan was to begin — very slowly — removing some of the older and less healthy cypress trees and giving their replacements a better chance to grow. The advanced age of the trees, the damage done to them by the (expensive and dangerous) pruning on the north side, and their deadening effect on under-story plants highlighted the need for gradual change. This is a 25-year plan. But a few strategic removals may begin this year.

Helen Wills: In stark and dramatic contrast to some of the above, the Helen Wills park remodel is proceeding extraordinarily well. The contractor is on track, the project is on schedule, foundations have been poured, and some playground concrete work has begun. There will certainly be one groundbreaking this year! ✦

SHOP LOCALLY!

Show our merchants
we need them!

THD Welcomes New Members

Nov. 2003 to Jan. 2004

Richard & Jill Berry, Greg Chiampou, Edmund Crow, Dawn Dannert, Marcia Packlick & Sandy D'Elia, Peter Fisler, Erica Galos, Steven & Sally Gordon, Paul Kohler,-Deana Logan & Joseph Najpaver, Katherine Petrin, Jimmie & Marti,-John M. & Linda C. Stedman, Mr. & Mrs. Joe Sullivan, Jayson Wechter, Julie Mushet & Ashraf Youssef, Bud & Caren Zisson

Fog Hill Market

Hanna Chedyak

415-781-8817

1300 Kearny

San Francisco, CA 94133

CLASSIFIED ADS

Classified rates are \$20 for 4 lines, \$30 for 5-7 lines. Please call 788-8667 to place an ad. Next deadline is May 6.

For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

Sign Up or Sign a Friend Up as a member of Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Complete and mail to THD, PO Box 330159, SF, CA 94133

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL: _____

CHECK ENCLOSED FOR 1-YEAR MEMBERSHIP

Individual \$25 _____ Household \$40 _____ Senior (age 65 and over) \$15 _____

THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Parking and Transportation. Chair, Bill Seelinger, 392-8450
billseel@aol.com. Promotes efforts to ease congestion, optimize white zones, upgrade public transportation. Works with Department of Parking and Traffic.

Planning and Zoning. Chair, Jeannie Milligan, Jeanne_M@pacbell.net. Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

Semaphore. Editor, Art Peterson 956-7817; artp@socrates.berkeley.edu. The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

Program. Chair, Maxine Schulman, 981-4042; BigMaxSF@aol.com. Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

Budget. Maya Armour, 986-1474; mlarmour@pacbell.net. As prescribed in bylaws for Treasurer.

Membership. Chair, Tom Noyes, 981-8520; tom@noyesfamily.com. As prescribed in Bylaws for Financial Secretary.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

Parks and Trees. Chair, Julieanne Christensen, 989-0882, julie@surfaces.com. Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

Oral History Project Chair, Audrey Tomaselli, 391-1792; tmsli@earthlink.net. Taped interviews provide historical documentation of living and working in the neighborhood.

THD Web Site. Webmaster, Tom Noyes, 981-8520; webmaster@thd.org. Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods. Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; gerrycrowley@aol.com. City-wide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

North Beach Neighborhood Coalition. Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; gerrycrowley@aol.com. Tel-Hi-sponsored group of residents, merchants and government agencies working together to address neighborhood issues.

N.E.R.T. June Fraps, 392-1187; junefraps@juno.com. Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.



WEB SITE = www.thd.org

Whether you want to catch up on THD's Oral Histories, see what the THD is up to, or submit old photos of the Hill, www.thd.org is the place to go. Use the Web site to discover or email information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between *Semaphores*.



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**TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS
P.O. BOX 330159
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133**

THD CALENDAR

Second Saturday stair and garden work parties at Pioneer
Park: May 8, June 12, July 10. For more information call
552-7774.

May

29: Outdoor movie at
Washington Square.

July

12: General membership
dinner.

June

7: New members cocktail
party.

Dates and locations subject to change. For information about
special THD events held in conjunction with the organization's
50th anniversary, see page 8

Schedules of Committee Meetings

PLANNING & ZONING: First Thursdays. Call for time and location.
986-7070.

**For more information, log on to [http://
www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org)**

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